Johnstown, City of
Johnstown
Cambria County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5669

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

CITY OF JOHNSTOWN

HABS No. PA-5669

INTRODUCTION

The city of Johnstown is located in the Laurel Highlands section of the Allegheny Mountains of western Pennsylvania. It lies at the steep, narrow, Y-shaped intersection of three river valleys -- the Little Conemaugh, the Stony Creek, and the Conemaugh. This location and topography have provided both the source and the limits of Johnstown's growth. In the nineteenth century the decision to route a canal, and later a railroad, along the contours of the river valleys compensated for the town's isolation in the otherwise difficult western Pennsylvania terrain and in the hinterlands of the distant population centers of Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. Perhaps even more important were the coal and iron ore yielded by the local terrain. The combination of transportation and natural resources supported the rapid growth of a local iron- and steel-making industry dominated by one company--Cambria Iron, later purchased by the Bethlehem Steel Company. The steel mills in turn supported the steady growth of Johnstown and surrounding communities.

In the twentieth century Johnstown again began to feel its isolation and provincialism. Local coal and iron ores were not of sufficient quality to meet the higher standards of the steel industry. The railroad, once the company's primary customer as well as shipper, lost its role as the country's most important transportation system. The decline of the basic steel industry in the postindustrial economy was dramatically evident in Johnstown in the 1970s when unemployment rose to over 20 percent, and Bethlehem Steel considered closing its Johnstown plants. Efforts to attract new businesses to the area echo the rhetoric of previous city boosters who had to contend with Johnstown's reputation as a dirty and noisy steel town prone to life-threatening floods.

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> *Johnstown itself was a beautiful town in my boyhood days [1830s-1840s]. Its surrounding hills were covered with dense forests down to the very margins of the streams which then bounded it on nearly all sides. . . . There were many apple orchards which had been planted by Joseph Johns and the Pennsylvania Germans who were its first settlers, and many sycamores and other native trees were still standing. How large the public square and the reservation at the lower end of Main Street were in those days! There were many log houses, reminders of the pioneers, and a few brick houses. Every house had a garden attached to it, and*

there were lilacs, hollyhocks, sunflowers, and other old-fashioned flowers everywhere.[1]

In James M. Swank's lifetime the population of Johnstown increased from a few hundred to over 20,000 and the town became host to one of the largest producers of iron and steel in the country. Understandably, he viewed the village of his youth with some nostalgia, yet as president of the American Iron and Steel Association for thirty-eight years, Swank was a fully assenting participant in the industrial transformation of his boyhood home. Swank's memories of an innocent pastoral community obscure the fact that, like many other towns in western Pennsylvania, Johnstown was laid out and founded as a speculative venture.

Its founder and would-be developer was Joseph Schantz, whose name was anglicized to Johns. He immigrated from Switzerland to Philadephia in 1769 and made a living farming in eastern Pennsylvania before moving to Somerset County in 1784. Here, on the floodplain at the confluence of Stony Creek and Little Conemaugh River, he began farming and, in 1800, laid out the town he called Conemaugh after an Indian village that was supposed to have occupied the site. Like other speculators, he hoped to profit not only from the sale of lots but from the increased opportunities for trade and commerce that would result from a concentrated population. To insure the successful establishment of a permanent town, these speculators maneuvered and negotiated to have their holdings designated as the governmental seat of newly formed counties.[2] Johns's town was situated in the section of Somerset County that was partitioned off in 1804 to form Cambria County. Clearly, Johns had foreseen this move four years earlier and meant to guarantee Conemaugh's future by seeing it named the new county seat. But his influence was insufficient to compensate for the town's location at the southern end of the county, away from the more important turnpike to the north. Ebensburg became the county seat and this failure is given as the reason for Johns's removal in 1807 to a farm near Davidsville in Somerset County where he died eight years later. Johns's town changed hands several times but did grow slowly, by 1820 accumulating a population of 200. In 1831 the town was officially incorporated and in 1834 the citizenry honored its founder by changing the name from Conemaugh to Johnstown.[3]

Canal Era

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[1] James M. Swank to Calvin C. Hayes, September 21, 1909, in James M. Swank, "Recollections of Early Johnstown," in his Cambria County Pioneers, (Philadelphia, 1910), 45. Calvin C. Hayes replaced David Beale as pastor of the Presbyterian congregation in Johnstown in May 1891. Nathan Daniel Shappee, "A History of Johnstown and the Great Flood of 1889: A Study of Disaster and Rehabilitation," dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1940.

[2] R. Eugene Harper, "Town Development in Early Western Pennsylvania," The Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine 71 (Jan. 1988), 3-26.

[3] Shappee, 23-4, 103-04.

> *. . . the city has been somewhat isolated, although the rails that opened up much of this Nation for settlement were rolled in Johnstown.*[4]

That first snub in being passed over as the county seat set the tone for the subsequent defensive stance of this ambitious city, hampered by geographical and topographical isolation and its image as a flood-prone, steel-mill town. But in 1828 Johnstown was awarded significant compensation when it was selected as one of the most important sites on the interior length of the proposed Pennsylvania Main Line Canal. Water transportation was crucial in the early years of the new republic; improved roads were rare. Johnstown relied on pack trails to connect it to larger centers of commerce and communication. The earliest route stretched north from Bedford; another reached west over the mountains from Frankstown in Huntingdon County and connected the Frankstown branch of the Juniata River to the Conemaugh at Johnstown. This access to river transportation had been the saving grace of Johns's fledgling town. Iron bars, "Juniata iron" from the numerous furnaces and fords scattered along the branches of the Juniata River in Blair and Huntingdon counties, were packed across the trails into the village, loaded onto flatboats or "arks," and shipped down the Conemaugh to Pittsburgh. Iron from the Shade furnace in Somerset County was sent along Shade Creek to Stony Creek and into Johnstown. Residents manufactured these boats and handled and stored the iron, and even started a few of their own manufacturing concerns--an iron forge, nail factory, tannery, and gristmill are recorded as operating in the town between 1800 and 1820. "Shooks" or barrel staves used in the West Indian sugar trade were made by lumbermen along Stony Creek and shipped south to the Caribbean. Networks of international trade had already penetrated the western Pennsylvania mountains.[5]

Because of its position at the head of navigable waters flowing west to Pittsburgh, Johnstown figured largely in plans for construction of a canal connecting Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. In the 1820s canal backers began lobbying the state legislature for funds and sponsorship of this grand "system of public works." With the inducement of drawing trade away from the Erie Canal, a parallel east-west route across New York state, the Pennsylvania legislature granted $300,000 in funding in 1826. Five years later the canal bed into Johnstown from the west was completed and excavation had begun for a canal basin to provide docking facilities and access to warehouses.[6]

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[4] Louis Levine et al., "The Potential for Human Resources and Economic Growth in a Declining Local Community: A Socio-Economic Study of the Johnstown, Pa., Economy" (Pennsylvania State University, 1969).

[5] Shappee, 33, 16. Richard A. Burkert, "Iron and Steelmaking in the Conemaugh Valley," in Johnstown: The Story of a Unique Valley, ed. Karl Berger (Johnstown, 1985), 261. Thomas J. Chapman, The Valley of the Conemaugh (Altoona, Pa., 1865), 17.

[6] Shappee, 35.

Peter Levergood, eventual successor to Joseph Johns as proprietor of the town, had built his home on the east side of the town plan and proved more resourceful than Johns in promoting development. He made contributions to Lutheran, Catholic, and Methodist congregations for their first churches, and when the canal arrived, he donated land to insure that the basin site was located near his property. His name was also among a list of citizens seeking reimbursement for property damage caused by canal construction, but the canal commissioners refused his petition. Some years later Levergood himself was appointed as a canal commissioner and was elected to the state legislature for two terms.[7]

With Johnstown established as the beginning of the western length of the canal and Hollidaysburg the beginning of the eastern length, the task of connecting the two towns began. The Allegheny Mountains, which separated the towns, form the divide for the eastern United States: water to the east flows to the Atlantic, streams to the west lead to the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico. Skeptics thought it impossible to build an easily navigable route across these mountains, but engineers led by Sylvester Welch devised a series of twenty alternating levels and planes to regularize the ascent and descent of thirty-seven miles over the summit. A double-track railroad was built across the peaks and in a counter-balanced winch system canal boats were loaded onto railroad cars and pulled or lowered along the stepped planes.

When the railroad was finished, travel time for crossing the state was reduced from three weeks to one, and the feasibility and convenience of transporting freight was vastly increased. Contemporaries viewed the completion of the canal, and especially of the portage railroad, as a grand feat and spoke of it with patriotic, republican rhetoric:

> [Mr. Welch, chief engineer,] has raised a monument to the intelligence, enterprise, and public spirit of Pennsylvania, more honorable than the temples and pyramids of Egypt, or the triumphant arches and columns of Rome. They were erected to commemorate the names of tyrants, or the battles of victorious chieftains, while these magnificent works are intended to subserve the interests of agriculture, manufacture, and commerce--to encourage the arts of peace--to advance the prosperity and happiness of the whole people of the United States. . . .[8]

The canal's actual impact on Johnstown apparently lived up to the rhetoric. George T. Swank, editor of the Johnstown Tribune during the 1880s, recalled the early canal days in contrast to the preceding years.

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[7] Shappee, 26-7.

[8] Shappee, 80, quoted from Hist. Six Counties, 580.

> . . . the whole character of the town suddenly changed. Canal boating and railroading took the place of flatboating; the Pennsylvania German element ceased to predominate in the make up of the population; communication with other parts of the State and with other States became more frequent: homespun clothing was thenceforward not so generally worn: the town at once lost nearly all its pioneer characteristics.[9]

The canal's boost to the local economy, the direct connection to Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, and the spectacle of all sorts of passengers and cargo passing through gave Johnstowners the inspiration and the means to aspire to a less provincial lifestyle. Ten transportation companies had offices and warehouses in town. Production of canal boats and railroad cars became important local industries. Local entrepreneurs supplied iron track components, bricks, and lime cement for canal maintenance. A number of hotels provided passengers and work crews with food and lodging, and brewers and butchers set up business to supply the hotels. The increased population generated by all this activity in turn encouraged trades and businesses that were not directly canal-related. Cabinet-makers, tailors, dentists, and physicians set up shop and one former boat painter branched out to produce "stained" wallpaper.[10]

According to the canal commissioners' reports, in 1839 Johnstown secured more canal income than any other town on the system, earning $95,000 from tolls alone. By 1854, however, this figure dropped to only $1,652. The Pennsylvania Railroad had completed its tracks across the state, which paralleled the canal, and the faster, year-round service insured the failure of Pennsylvania's grand system of public works. Competition being impossible, the state sold the canal to the railroad in 1857 for $7.5 million. The debate surrounding the sale is an early example of the continuing argument over the effect of state-run utilities. Those supporting the sale "insisted that it [the canal] was a fountain-head of corruption and fraud, and was used as an electioneering machine by whatever political party happened to hold the reins of power." Opponents of the sale felt it was the state's responsibility to prevent the railroad from achieving an exclusive monopoly on cross-state transportation.[11]

The relatively brief duration and sudden end of the canal era may have contributed to historians' tendency to imbue it with a romantic air and to view its end as tragic. Some towns that grew up along the canal witnessed the loss of their only economic base. One nineteenth-century historian described these places as "dilapidated and depopulated. Grass and thistles are now

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9 Shappee, 44, quoted from the Johnstown Tribune, June 18, 1889.

10 Shappee, 45-7

11 Shappee, 48. Nancy Coleman, "History of Public Transportation" in Johnstown: The Story of a Unique Valley, 411. Chapman, 96-8.

growing up in their streets. . . . The bats now inhabit the palaces of the Caesars."[12]

Johnstown escaped this fate largely because of its geography. Paralleling the canal, the new railroad line followed the path worn by the Conemaugh down into the valley and through the famous Conemaugh Gap northwest of the town. When construction plans were finalized in 1847 the local paper predicted that the railroad would make Johnstown "a depot into which will pour the vast wealth of the surrounding country. . . . Our iron, coal, fire clay, water cement, lime, etc. . . . [will] be developed and sent to markets both east and west."[13]

At least one local businessman also saw opportunity in the coming of the railroad. George S. King owned several iron furnaces in the area and he convinced his partner that they should turn their resources to making iron rails for the railroad. After soliciting investors in Boston and New York, King finally secured the necessary $1 million in capital and formed the Cambria Iron Company in 1852, the same year the railroad connection through Johnstown was completed. The combination of railroad and ironworks was a powerful one. Johnstown was soon transformed in ways the local newspaper editor could not have foreseen.[14]

Iron and Steel

> *In no part of the United States are found combined so many advantages for the manufacture of iron, as at Johnstown. . . . Millions of tons of iron can be made here without going three-quarters of a mile for any portion of the coal, ore and lime, or for the stone and brick for the furnace building and hearths.*[15]

The southwestern quadrant of Pennsylvania had a tradition of iron making and forging that preceded the Cambria Iron Company. Pig iron produced by the region's many individual furnaces had helped support Johnstown during the early flatboat era and formed a significant portion of canal freight. In 1833 sixty canal boats passed through the village carrying 1,138 tons of freight, of which about 700 tons were iron. The next year, after the Allegheny Portage Railroad opened, the total iron tonnage increased to 5,600. John Holliday

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[12] Chapman, 98. For an alternative description of the demise of the Allegheny Portage Railroad see Sharon Brown, "Historic Resource Study: Cambria Iron Company, America's Industrial Heritage Project," draft (September 1987), 37.

[13] Coleman, 431.

[14] Burkert, 258-64. Brown, draft, 38-44.

[15] Cambria Iron Company pamphlet, 1853.

built a forge in Johnstown in 1808 to work some of the Juniata iron but a flood damaged the new facility. Peter Levergood took over the new machinery, moved it just outside town along the Conemaugh River, and operated the "Cambria forge" until 1825. In the 1830s a foundry for molding iron was in operation.[16]

As increasing amounts of iron came into Johnstown for processing or passed through to factories in Pittsburgh, George King began searching the hills around town for evidence of local ore deposits. He found several veins of ore that tested well, and he initiated the iron-making business in Johnstown. In the early 1840s his company built Cambria Furnace on the Laurel Run four miles west of Johnstown and within ten years owned four furnaces in the area. When it was clear that the railroad would soon come through the valley, King made the decision to complement his furnaces with a rail-rolling mill. This was a significant departure from the traditional rural practice in which the two steps were separated. Pig iron was made in furnaces located next to a water supply for power and transportation, near ore and lime deposits, and in heavily forested areas that would provide the vast amount of wood needed for charcoal. Forging or molding the iron bars into finished products was usually done in more central locations with easier access to markets. The pace of this system was insufficient to meet the demand created by the railroad and to maintain competition with English producers. A rolling mill with high-volume capacity was a large-scale operation that consumed the output of a number of iron furnaces and required a much more substantial capital investment than that assembled by the ironmasters of the earlier period.[17]

To attract the investors needed to keep the furnaces and rolling mills of Cambria Iron running, King and his partner, Peter Shoenberger, published a report in 1853 on the progress of the works that included statements from Pittsburgh and Philadelphia iron manufacturers who testified to the company's promising outlook. In addition to the four existing charcoal furnaces, a rolling mill and four coke furnaces were under construction in March 1853. There were beds of iron ore and coal, cement, clay and sandstone. There were forests for charcoal and lumber, and farmland for maintaining work animals. And most important, there was the railroad to carry raw materials and finished product, as well as provide a more direct link to the cosmopolitan world of finance and trade.[18]

Even with these advantages, soliciting reliable financing to keep Cambria Iron solvent proved difficult during the first years of operation and it went through several reorganizations. Only a year after starting up, King and Shoenberger, the original partners, sold out to new backers from

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16 Shappee, 47-8. Burkert, 257.

17 Brown, 63. For an account of the early nineteenth-century iron industry in western Pennsylvania sae Christine Davis and Laura Sparks' report on the industry in Blair and Huntingdon Counties prepared for the Historic American Engineering Record, Summer 1988.

18 The Cambria Iron Company of Johnstown, Pennsylvania, New York, 1853.

Philadelphia. Chief among the Philadephia creditors was the firm of Martin, Morrell and Company which, having the most at stake, appointed a committee to see what could be done about the floundering business. Heading the committee was Daniel J. Morrell who visited Johnstown and subsequently convinced his firm that Cambria Iron was worth continued investment. Another year passed, however, and the company was forced to suspend operations. Once again Morrell reorganized it, under the new name of Wood, Morrell and Company in 1855. When this new organization had completely bought out the bonds held by Cambria Iron Company in 1862, they reverted to the Cambria name. With Morrell based in Johnstown for on-site supervision, steady financing from Philadelphia, and increasing demand for the Cambria product, the company prospered. By the mid-1870s it had become one of the largest iron and steel works in the nation.[19]

From its original one-acre site on the north bank of the Conemaugh River barely one-half mile from the center of town, the ironworks expanded rapidly. In 1878 the complex extended over sixty acres; the company owned a total of 48,403 acres in seven counties and had built sixty-eight miles of its own railroad and underground mine track. Orders for railroad-construction products dominated its sales list. The specialty was iron, and after 1871, steel rails, but Cambria men also made angles, billets, machine and track bolts, railroad car axles and wheels, and filled special orders for such things as steel blooms to make wire cable for the Brooklyn Bridge and for other large steel castings.[20]

As a means of diversifying the product line, Cambria Iron formed a partnership with a steel-products company in Jersey City, New Jersey, owned by the Gautier family. Gautier moved to Johnstown in 1878 as a subsidiary of Cambria Iron, located on the south bank of the Little Conemaugh at the edge of the downtown (HABS No. PA-5670-1). In 1881 Josiah Gautier dissolved the partnership and Cambria completely took over his company as a department within the organization. The Gautier Division specialized in agricultural products--primarily barbed wire, as well as implement parts, springs, rake and harrow teeth, and plow shares.[21]

In 1898 amid concerns about the need for improvements and expansion of the company's holdings in Johnstown, some consideration was given to the possibility of moving the works to a site on the Great Lakes. Instead, Cambria Iron was reorganized as Cambria Steel Company, and over the next two decades $70 million was spent for improvements and additions. About three miles up the Little Conemaugh River from Gautier and downtown Johnstown, the Franklin Works were built between the boroughs of Franklin and East Conemaugh. In operation by 1901, these works superseded the old Lower Works as the heart of Cambria Steel. While the Lower Works had been the site of an early

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19 Brown, 42-4, 49-53.

20 Brown, 61, 96. Shappee, 90, 94. Burkert, 281-83.

21 Shappee, 96. Brown, 58-9. Burkert, 283.

Bessemer steel plant, Franklin was equipped for steel production in open-hearth furnaces that had a much larger capacity and could be more carefully regulated to meet increasingly complex product specifications.[22]

Down the Conemaugh on the other side of the Lower Works, Cambria Steel built the Rod and Wire Division in 1910-11. The twenty-one-acre site across the river from Coopersdale was bordered by the river and Pennsylvania Railroad tracks on one side and by the community of Morrellville on the other. The Rod and Wire Division supplemented the kind of work done at Gautier: producing wire for makers of nails and fences, as well as for customers who would transform it into everything from upholstery springs to window screens.[23]

Five years after the Rod and Wire Division opened, Cambria Steel was purchased by the Midvale Steel and Ordnance Company of Philadelphia. The transfer in stock ownership took place concurrent with the mergers and maneuvering that occurred during the World War I steel-industry boom. But by the 1920s the boom had collapsed: Midvale's earnings fell drastically and the company sold all its holdings except their original plant in Philadelphia to the Bethlehem Steel Corporation. The Saucon Iron Company, Bethlehem's parent company, was founded in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, in 1857 and, like Cambria Iron, began rolling iron railroad rails a few years later. In 1904 Charles Schwab reorganized the Bethlehem Steel Company and began building a corporation to rival the largest steel conglomerates in the nation. Schwab, a native of Loretto in northern Cambria County, had quickly risen through the ranks of the Carnegie Steel Company to become president in 1894, and was the first president of U. S. Steel when that giant corporation was formed in 1901. During his tenure as head of Bethlehem, he pledged to make the Cambria Steel works "one of the greatest in the world." Through the 1920s approximately $35 million was spent on improvements to the Johnstown facilities.[24]

Twentieth-century changes in markets, technology, and transportation reduced Johnstown's advantage as an industrial center. Johnstown was not as advantageously located for markets and raw materials as Chicago, Gary, and Pittsburgh. Despite modernization efforts, the 1920s did not rekindle the aggressive expansion efforts of earlier years. The work force was reduced by 7 percent during this decade and the Depression hit the mills hard. Unemployment in Johnstown reached 30 percent in 1934. With World War II production rose again, however, and prosperity continued into the 1950s. In the 1960s the American steel industry had to face serious overseas competition for the first time in more than 100 years. Constant modernization was needed to keep pace and Bethlehem failed to continue upgrading the Johnstown plants. In the 1970s the added expense of meeting the Environmental Protection Agency's new pollution-control requirements rendered Johnstown a liability to

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22 Burkert, 295-97. Brown, 137-39.

23 Brown, 136-37. Burkert, 297.

24 Brown, 116-20. Burkert, 307.

Bethlehem. Plans were made to cut production in half. Renovations to the furnace complex that would have given the plant a reprieve were interrupted by the flood of 1977. The plant was severely damaged and Bethlehem management went back to its original plans to slash production. Furnaces and buildings were dismantled and the work force was further reduced.[25] Today the mills operate at a fraction of their former capacity, but Bethlehem Steel Corporation continues to be an important presence in Johnstown as the city struggles to cope with the consequences of its history as a community tied to a single industry.

Related Businesses and Industries

> *Connected with these works are stores and shops of different kinds. . . . These various establishments do an immense amount of business which is felt all through the town. To take away the rolling mill and its influences, Johnstown would be something like the play of Hamlet with the part of Hamlet left out.*[26]

From Cambria Iron's beginning, the company's influence reached far beyond mere job opportunities in its rolling mills. Satellite industries and businesses were set up almost immediately to insure that the company had total control over its environment. In an 1878 analysis of the company, Alexander L. Holley and Lenox Smith wrote about its manipulation of coal and iron-ore supplies, but their analysis would describe the company's many other interests--from cement works to employees--as well.

> The large body of coal and iron land owned by the company around its works in Cambria and adjoining counties--all carefully selected for specific purposes in the several processes in the production of iron and steel rails, etc.--enable it to control and regulate supplies, to produce with the utmost economy. . . . They also render the company independent of the fluctuations and vicissitudes of the general market. . . .[27]

In conjunction with firing the first of its new furnaces, Cambria Iron's Rolling Mill Mine opened in 1855. Located across the Conemaugh River from the

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[25] Ewa Morawska, For Bread With Butter: Lifeworlds of East Central Europeans in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, 1890-1940 (New York, 1985), 157-59. Burkert, 307-12. John Strohmeyer, Crisis in Bethlehem: Big Steel's Struggle To Survive (Bethesda, Md.: Adler and Adler, 1986), 194-204.

[26] Chapman, 160.

[27] Alexander Holley and Lenox Smith, "American Iron and Steel Works: Works of the Cambria Iron Company," London Engineering XXV (June 21, 1878), 487, reproduced in Brown, Appendix 14, 252. Shappee, 98-9.

rolling mill very near "the Point," the mine covered ten square miles -- in 1922 "the largest area in the nation worked by a single opening." (In 1902 it was the site of a catastrophe commensurate with its size when 112 miners were killed in a mine-gas explosion.) Even closer to the mill was the Blast Furnace Mine with an entrance in the rolling mill yard. Entrances to Cambria mines were also located in the Rosedale, Woodvale, Conemaugh, Franklin, and East Conemaugh sections of the city.[28]

As advertised in the company's promotional literature, iron-ore mines were just as conveniently located. George King first found ore deposits in the Laurel Run area in the 1840s. The vein was soon traced across Benshoff's Hill above Minersville, into the neighboring Prospect Hill above the Lower Works, and as far east as Woodvale.[29]

Ore and coal deposits were also located along the ridges forty to sixty miles east of Johnstown in Bedford, Blair, and Huntingdon counties, and the company opened several mines around this region. A subsidiary company, the Blair Iron and Coal Company, also operated blast furnaces nearer these sources. Local ores were used in the Johnstown blast furnaces until around the late 1870s when their composition was determined unsuitable for the new Bessemer process. Cambria then began purchasing mines in the Michigan iron-ore ranges. Another Cambria subsidiary, the Keystone Manganese and Iron Company, supplied ore from 8,000 company-owned acres in Arkansas. To adapt to new technological processes, the company also expanded its selection of coal types, purchasing land in the Connellsville coal fields east of Pittsburgh. In 1888 Cambria operated 600 coke ovens in the area.[30]

Brick, cement, and related clay products were other crucial ingredients in iron making. They were used for building materials, for molds, and for lining furnaces and ovens. American steel manufacturers were known for their hard-driving use of machinery, and furnaces or open hearths in continuous operation needed to be relined every few months. Charles S. Price, superintendent of the Cambria Iron Works from 1892 to 1909 and a resident of Westmont, characterized the prevailing philosophy: "The English idea with regard to blast furnaces is to run moderately and save the lining. What do we care about the lining? We think that a lining is good for so much iron and the sooner it makes it the better." Cambria Iron Company owned its own brickworks in Millville, Coopersdale, and in Woodvale, but there was enough demand to support an independently owned works located beyond Tenth Avenue in Cambria City. Known locally as "the cement mill," it was originally owned by the state and operated for construction and maintenance of the canal. In 1857 it was purchased by Andrew J. Haws, who had come to Johnstown to work as a "heater" in the ironworks. Haws, described as "one of the most enterprising

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28 Brown, 129-30. Shappee, 98-9. Holley and Smith, 485-86.

29 Burkert, 258-59.

30 Shappee, 97, 99. Burkert, 285. Brown, 57. Holley and Smith, 486. S. B. McCormick, A Sketch of Johnstown and Suburbs, and The Cambria Iron Works (Pittsburgh, 1867), 14.

business men in or about Johnstown," used his firsthand knowledge of the company's needs to make it his primary customer. Their alliance is evidenced by the fact that Cambria's company store also served as the company store for Haws' employees.[31]

Tanneries were one of the few major business types not directly related to the ironworks in Johnstown. William Rosensteel, noted as an abolitionist who recruited black families in Maryland to work for him, owned a tannery in Woodvale. After 1889 Rosensteel relocated his business along Laurel Run and the area became known as Tanneryville. McConaughy's Steam Tannery, built between Johnstown and Millville in 1861, was described as "by far the largest establishment of the kind" in the region. The owner, James P. McConaughy, was also involved in land speculation. In 1853 he laid out the borough of Cambria City and sold lots to employees at the new ironworks across the river.[32]

A host of small mercantile businesses were supported by the growing population in the downtown and surrounding communities. The first bank was started in 1854 and issued checks illustrated with a rolling mill. Dry goods and general merchandise shops multiplied. By 1878 there were eighty-three retail stores in the city. Specialties trades of the 1870s included "cigar sellers," "oyster and ice cream saloons," confectioners, and a steam-heated greenhouse.[33]

Dominating the downtown retail scene was Cambria Iron's company store, Wood, Morrell, and Company (HABS No. PA-5388). Under different names, it had been associated with the company since its founding. Symbolically situated between Johnstown proper and the works, it overlooked the center of town to the south, on the north the Pennsylvania Railroad and Prospect borough, to the east Johnstown and Conemaugh Borough, and on the west Millville, the works and Cambria City. "Hence, it will be observed," wrote one contemporary reporter, "that it is located in the very center of trade, and on the leading thoroughfare of Johnstown and suburbs." In 1867 the company built a grand three-story brick building on the site that included space for departments covering the spectrum of retail trade. There were groceries and hardware, clothing and shoes, carpet and furniture, books, and livestock feeds.[34]

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31 The Romance of Steel (New York, 1907), 362. Shappee, 70, 95-8. Brown, 55, 57-8. Chapman, 172-73. McCormick, 3. See illustration and location of A.J. Haws and Son Firebrick and Cement Works in the Illustrated Historical Atlas of Cambria County, Pennsylvania (Philadelphia: Atlas Publishing Co., 1890). An indication of Haws' success is that the names of his son and daughters appear in the history of Westmont Borough.

32 "Abolitionist Recruited Blacks for Tannery," in "Heritage: A Black History of Johnstown," Johnstown Tribune-Democrat (February 12, 1980), p.3, special issue. Hope B. Johnson with B. T. duPont, "The Black Community," in Johnstown: The Story of a Unique Valley (Johnstown, 1985), 545, 577. Henry Wilson Storey, History of Cambria County, Pennsylvania (New York, 1907), 3: 227. Chapman, 169-70. Shappee, 122.

33 Shappee, 126-34.

34 Shappee, 95. Brown, 163-65. McCormick, 3.

Following the policy of the ironworks, the store was supplied in large part by Cambria Iron-owned manufactories. Shoes and boots came from its shoe factory, and cloth and flour and cereal products from woolen and flour mills in Woodvale. Meat for the grocery came from company farms via its slaughterhouse. Furniture may have been supplied by the company's furniture factory and planing mill at Mineral Point.[35]

Two company-owned businesses, both incorporated in 1864, supplied the works, the store, and sold directly to the public and to other businesses. The Johnstown Mechanical Works, originally founded during the canal era, was located in Conemaugh borough. Under Cambria's ownership it planned to operate "a foundry, a smithshop, machine shop, make railroad cars, manufacture pumps, plane flooring and weather-boarding, make cutting boxes and, in short, make everything that a business community desires to be done." In the late 1880s the machine shop was absorbed into the Gautier Division. The Johnstown Manufacturing Company in Woodvale encompassed the woolen and flour mills as well as a brickworks. The woolen mill was a four-story brick building surrounded by storerooms, a boiler and dye house, and a boarding house and single houses for the 150 or so "operatives."[36]

When Cambria's Iowa Barbed Wire Mill in Woodvale was consolidated in the new Cautier Division, the Company leased the vacated mill to the Johnson Street Rail Company. This small company was formed in 1883 by partners Tom L. Johnson and Arthur J. Moxham with financing from the DuPont family. Specialists in making rails for street railways, the company moved to Johnstown because Cambria consented to try rolling their oddly shaped rails. When these first attempts were successful, their business took off. It outgrew the borrowed facilities in Woodvale, so the company purchased land just south of Johnstown where they built their own rolling mill and laid out a town to support it. Tom Johnson named the town "Moxham" after his partner. The new mill went into operation in 1888, rolling rails from steel blooms purchased from Cambria.[37]

As demand for this product continued to grow, the Johnson Company launched plans to become more independent by making its own steel. Cambria Iron Company saw this move as the transformation of a good customer into a potential competitor and moved to prevent it by blocking the company's access to the Pennsylvania Railroad. Through its control of the Johnstown City Council, Cambria vetoed the Johnson Company's request for additional tracks through the city. As an alternative to expanding their facilities in Johnstown, Johnson and Moxham decided to move their plant to a new site in Lorain, Ohio, on Lake Erie. The rolling mill machinery was moved in 1895, but rather than abandon the works in Moxham, the Johnson Company revamped it to

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35 Shappee, 95. Brown, 110.

36 Brown, 57-8. Chapman, 162-68.

37 Brown, 134-35. Burkert, 286-87.

handle their more specialized railway-switch department. In 1898 the company was reorganized as the Lorain Steel Company and three years later it was one of the many small companies consolidated into the giant United States Steel Corporation. The Moxham plant continued to operate under the Lorain name until 1953 when it officially became known as the Johnstown Works of U.S. Steel. In 1953 the plant had 2,800 employees; but by 1982, after more than a decade of decline, the employee roster was reduced to 350. The plant closed in 1983 but was reopened several months later under the new ownership of the Johnstown Corporation.[38]

Paternalism of Cambria Iron Company

The kind of clout that allowed the Cambria Iron Company to control the city council and influence the business decisions of rivals in the community was fostered by policies first enacted within the company itself. The company extended the self-sufficient model of the early iron furnace plantations into the twentieth century. It controlled not only the sources of raw materials and transportation, but it also had a great deal of influence in the day-to-day life of its employees and in the larger life of the community. Through benevolent services to employees--housing, church sponsorship, the company store, a library, and hospital--it attempted a degree of control over the worker's world beyond the mill walls, and by corporate involvement and that of its managerial elite in ruling cultural, economic, and political bodies, it directly and indirectly controlled public policy and services.

The daily necessities of food and clothing were provided at the company store's main building and branches. Although the store was owned by the company, employees were not forced to shop there. When store scrip was not in circulation, the store manager could grant an employee credit after checking with his boss at the mill. Store scrip was sometimes issued in lieu of wages, however, and a report by the Philadelphia Record in 1891 claimed that "the pass-book and store-order constituted the only currency with which . . . employees were familiar." With company scrip they could purchase the services of doctors and clergymen as well as the "necessaries and luxuries" available at the counter.[39]

In 1887, after the Pennsylvania governor vetoed a bill granting $15,000 in matching state funds for a public hospital in Johnstown, Cambria built a hospital for its workers. It was noted as the first company in the country to do so. The hospital was centrally located on Prospect Hill between Gautier and the Lower Works, serviced by two ambulances that could transfer accident victims within twenty minutes. The Cambria Mutual Benefit Association, the company's employee insurance organization, ran the hospital. In 1912 member

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[38] Burkert, 290-91, 299-300, 309, 312.

[39] Shappee, 95. John William Bennett, "Iron Workers in Woods Run and Johnstown: The Union Era, 1865-1895," (Ph.D. diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1977), 171-72. Brown, 163-65. Immigrants in Industries, Part 2: Iron and Steel Manufacturing I (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1911), 385.

employees were charged 90 cents each month, for which they would receive treatment and a one-time "benefit" payment determined by a standard accident scale--$1,000 for accidental death, $500 for the loss of one hand or foot, $1,000 for loss of both hands or feet, $200 for loss of one eye, $1,000 for loss of both eyes. If the injured workman had a family, a weekly benefit was paid them to compensate for the loss of wages while he was in the hospital. The weekly payment went to the hospital if the employee had no dependents. For a fee of $6 to $7 a week, the hospital treated members of the community who were not company employees. In 1891 the Conemaugh Valley Memorial Hospital, a public facility, was opened in the Eighth Ward. Cambria's hospital closed in 1931.[40]

The Cambria Library, a company institution founded in 1870, was also eventually opened to the general public. Started by individual subscriptions matched by the company, it was originally housed in the downtown fire hall. By 1877 membership and interest had declined so much that the company leased the books and moved them to a room in the company office. Employees made enough use of them there to encourage establishment of a permanent library. The company purchased a lot at the corner of Washington and Walnut streets across from its store and office building, and the new library was dedicated in 1881. Within six years the facility, owner of almost 7,000 volumes, was deemed a success. Patrons who could afford it paid a $2 annual fee; others were permitted free access. The building and its collections were destroyed in the 1889 flood, but it was rebuilt on the same site in 1892, one of the earliest Carnegie libraries.[41]

The new facility was maintained and supported by the Cambria Iron Company and much like other Carnegie libraries, it functioned as a hegemonic force in the community. It was presented as "a gift from the Cambria Iron Company to the people of Johnstown" with the implication that it was a free and disinterested donation for the good of the people. With this gift the company gained a public relations asset and the expectation of continued obligation from its workers and the larger community. When the decision to build the library was announced, the editor of the local newspaper praised it as an example of "the company's interest in the moral welfare of Johnstown." Other commentators on the industrial scene also praised Cambria Iron's "enlightened management," citing the "schools, libraries, and benefit societies established under the company's supervision." In telling

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[40] Shappee, 178. Bennett, 171. Brown, 170-73. "Helping the Workingmen to Help Themselves, How Cambria Steel Company Aids in the Development and Maintenance of Institutions for the Benefit of Its Employees," Iron Trade Review (June 6, 1912), 1213-15. Burkert, 284. Information on Conemaugh Valley Memorial Hospital in "Johnstown, Pennsylvania, 1989 Calendar," month of October, and in Shappee, 569-70.

[41] Shappee, 152-53. Bennett, 161. Brown, 167-70. Paul L. Krause, "Patronage and Philanthropy in Industrial America: Andrew Carnegie and the Free Library in Braddock, Pa.," The Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine 71 (April 1988), 127-45. Krause notes "that the first instance of Carnegie's legendary philanthropy in the United States coincided with a major instance of his legendary ruthlessness"--the donation of the library in Braddock and the lockout at Carnegie's Edgar Thompson Works in Braddock. Similarly, in Johnstown we should note the coincidence of the library donation and the collapse of the South Fork Hunting and Fishing Club's dam. Carnegie was a member of the Club which never acknowledged responsibility for the death and destruction caused in Johnstown by the collapse of the neglected, ill-repaired dam.

juxtaposition, the article describes the Company's complete independence from unions. Like its neighbor, the company store, the library was situated between the Lower Works and the downtown. Using the two institutions as intermediaries, Cambria Iron presented the cosmopolitan world of commerce and culture to the people of Johnstown and, thus, influenced both material and cultural production in the city.[42]

Night-school classes sponsored by the company were closely associated with the library and represented another means of demonstrating civic-mindedness while expanding its influence. A night school for employees was established as early as 1857 and when construction of the library made additional space available, offerings were expanded. Classes tended to be related to business and company operations--mathematics, metallurgy, mechanics, and mechanical drawing. In 1881 the Library Association set up the Cambria Scientific Institute to oversee course offerings. The roster of instructors was drawn directly from company staff: John Fulton, head mining engineer and general manager for four years, taught geology, mining engineering and mineralogy; T. T. Morrell, a company chemist, taught metallurgy; James McMillen, manager of the company store, taught "the principles of business"; Cyrus Elder, company lawyer, taught social science and moral philosophy. In the 1920s reports on student performance were forwarded to D. M. Stackhouse, assistant general superintendent. The departments in which they worked were noted and their participation could affect future recommendations for hiring and promotions.[43]

For the Eastern European immigrants who made up a swelling proportion of Cambria's work force after 1880, participation in these classes was virtually out of the question. Charles Rumford Walker, who spent summer 1919 as a participant-observer working in a steel mill near Pittsburgh, wrote that one of his immigrant coworkers found the energy and time to attend English classes, but the grind of the twelve-hour day forced him to give it up after a few weeks. The grueling ten- to twelve-hour shifts and seven-day work week made leisure time a rarity, and language barriers and educational and cultural backgrounds tended to rule out non-language classes. In addition to the more technical courses offered through the library and institute, the company sponsored night classes in English "that denounced the 'foreign ties' of the immigrants." The theme of Americanization stressed here, in the company's welfare and safety programs, in the local newspaper, and in classes led by the company-sponsored YMCA, reflected the anxiety over and attempts to contain

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[42] Shappee, 78. Krause, 143. Despite efforts that led to confrontations in 1874, 1919, and 1937, Johnstown steel workers were not successfully unionized until 1941. Bruce Williams and Michael Yates, "Labor in Johnstown," in Johnstown: The Story of a Unique Valley, 589-638.

[43] Shappee, 141-42, 154. Bennett, 160-61. Brown, 168-69. "Helping the Workingmen to Help Themselves," 1218. In his autobiography, John Fulton recorded that James McMillen's management of the company store was "poor" but that he was kept on and "petted as a spy taking gossip" to the company's main office in Philadelphia. McMillen was finally removed from the position in July 1891. Fulton was general manager of the Cambria Iron Company at the time. Fulton, The Autobiography of John Fulton, A.M., E.M., Written During 1912 and 1914, Covering From His Birth in 1826 until 1914, (Johnstown, Pa.), V:170-71.

these strangers who did not seem to immediately recognize established patterns of authority.[44]

Other cultural and recreational institutions supported by Cambria Iron included the YMCA, the Art Institute for Women, and the Johnstown Opera House (originally Union Hall). The Opera House was intended to provide a facility for presentation of public "lectures of a cultural nature" and the company staffed the program committee. Also open to more exclusive clientele associated with the mills were the Cambria Club House and hotel at the corner of Main and Walnut streets, and the Johnstown Country Club and the Westmont Tennis Club, both in Westmont. Each of these facilities was set up by the company and maintained by a combination of membership fees and company contributions.[45]

On a more mundane, structural level, the city became utterly dependent on the company for support. Independent civic improvements attempted by the town council were sporadic and "slipshod," in part because the Cambria Iron Company was so dominant that local government never had to develop its own resources. The first major company-town undertaking was to charter a water company in 1866, to increase and regulate the water supply to the mills and to "the boroughs of Johnstown, Conemaugh, Millville, Prospect, Cambria and the vicinity." Cambria Iron bought half the stock in the Johnstown Water Company and Daniel J. Morrell served as its president. David Peelor, a civil engineer for the company, was assigned to survey the area for the new system. Reservoirs were built on Wildcat and Laurel Runs west of town, and additional pipeline was laid from Shade Creek to the south in 1888. It was not until 1963 that the boroughs of Johnstown, Southmont, and Westmont formed a joint water authority and purchased the water company from Bethlehem Steel.[46]

The Johnstown Street Railway Company, linking the western, southern, and eastern extensions of the city, was also tied to Cambria Iron. It was formed in 1882 and was headed by James McMillen, manager of the company store who also was an officer in the Johnstown Manufacturing Company and the water company. Tracks were opened in April 1883 that ran from Morrellville through Johnstown to Conemaugh and south to Moxham. In 1888 the horse-powered system carried 817,401 passengers.[47]

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[44] Charles Rumford Walker, Steel: The Diary of a Furnace Worker (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1922), 124, 155. Morawska, 169.

[45] Shappee, 151, 154, 173. Bennett, 162. Brown, 167. Morawska, 87. Michael P. Weber and Ewa Morawska, "East Europeans in Steel Towns: A Comparative Analysis," (compares Pittsburgh and Johnstown) Journal of Urban History 11 (May 1985), 288-89. "Helping the Workingmen to Help Themselves," Iron Trade Review, 1218-19.

[46] Shappee, 114-15. Bennett, 157. Louis Levine et al., "The Potential for Human Resources and Economic Growth in a Declining Local Community: A Socio-Economic Study of the Johnstown, Pa. Economy," (Penn State Univ., Univ. Park, Pa., 1969), p. 152. This study was sponsored by the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, Bureau of Employment Security.

[47] Nancy Coleman, "History of Public Transportation," in Johnstown: The Story of a Unique Valley, 436-37. Shappee, 116.

When Cambria Iron decided it needed an expanded, reliable supply of heating and lighting gas, the town once again received service as an appendage of the company. Natural gas had been discovered west of Greensburg, and Johnstown's Andrew J. Haws joined a group of wealthy Pittsburghers to form the Westmoreland and Cambria Natural Gas Company. The steel mills in both counties would be important customers, but service was also provided to Johnstown households; in return for an exclusive three-year contract, the company agreed to grant free gas to churches and public buildings. Electric lights were installed in the mills in 1881 but the town was left to secure its own service. Municipal buildings and downtown streets were lit by electricity five years later. Telephone service reached Johnstown early in 1889; Cambria Iron interests had been connected by telephone lines eleven years earlier. The first communication was between the company store and the woolen mill of Johnstown Manufacturing Company in Woodvale. Eventually homes of company officials were incorporated into the system.[48]

Telegraph lines had come into town in 1856 as part of the equipment necessary to the Pennsylvania Railroad, so the railroad was fundamentally crucial not only to the town's economy but also for communication with the outside world. Cambria Iron, in turn, was very important to the railroad; in 1879 the iron company transported freight valued at $1.5 million by rail (HABS No. PA-5389). Both organizations were powerful forces in local business and politics. They shared controlling interests in at least one of Cambria Iron's satellite enterprises, the Johnstown Manufacturing Company. In 1891, when the Johnson Steel Company attempted to launch plans to extend rail lines from a branch of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad through Johnstown to connect with the Pennsylvania line, Cambria Iron and the Pennsylvania Railroad acted in concert to prevent the construction of what would have threatened respective monopolies on steelmaking and rail transportation. Yet it had been at the urging of Cambria General Manager Daniel J. Morrell that the B&O built a spur in 1881 from Rockwood in Somerset County into the south end of Johnstown and connected with Cambria's own track into the mills. The iron company underwrote the construction in order to express its dissatisfaction with the Pennsylvania Railroad's failure to build additional freight access to the mills. Because the B&O was prevented from extending its track so that it could offer through service, it never became a significant challenge to the Pennsylvania line. The location and grandeur of the Pennsylvania Railroad's station demonstrated its position in the city--square within the confines of Cambria Iron Company's Millville, it was the site of exchange with the world beyond Cambria's grasp.[49]

Flood

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[48] Shappee, 119-20.

[49] Shappee, 117-18, 120. Burkert, 291. Chapman, 167.

Johnstown had gained some national recognition by the 1880s as an iron- and steel-making center but after May 31, 1889, it was catapulted to world attention as the victim of a catastrophic flood in which over 2,200 persons were killed. Two subsequent floods, in 1936 and 1977, also caused loss of life and millions of dollars in property damage that served to reinforce the city's notoriety in the national imagination as "that place where there was a flood." The 1889 disaster, by far the most spectacular and devastating, was the subject of extensive and sensational news coverage.

Unprecedented rain had swelled the rivers coming into Johnstown until, by noon on Friday, May 31, water was waist-deep in the downtown streets. Fourteen miles up the Stoney Creek, river run-off filled up the South Fork Dam basin and overflow was eating into the breast of the dam, built forty-nine years earlier as a reservoir for the Pennsylvania Main Line Canal. After the canal's demise the dam was neglected. It and surrounding farm and woodlands were finally purchased in 1879 by a group of wealthy Pittsburghers looking for a country retreat. They built a clubhouse and a number of lakeside "cottages" open only to members and guests of the South Fork Hunting and Fishing Club. The quality of the club's repairs to the dam was of major concern to Daniel J. Morrell, for Cambria Iron Company's investments in the valley totalled $50 million. When he heard that rain had damaged repairs for the second time, Morrell sent his second-in-command, John Fulton, a geologist and mining engineer, to inspect the work. Fulton reported that the repairs were shoddy and that no provision had been made for a drainage system to release sufficient overflow and control the water level. Morrell wrote to the club president, enclosing a copy of Fulton's report, and urged him to order a thorough renovation. The Cambria Iron Company, Morrell stated, "would contribute liberally toward making the dam absolutely safe." The offer was curtly rebuffed, Fulton's evaluation of conditions dismissed as incompetent assertions, and Morrell was assured that "you and your people are in no danger from our enterprise."[50]

The breast of the South Fork Dam disintegrated at 3:10 p.m. on the afternoon of May 31, thus releasing 20 million tons of water into the valley. Fifty-seven minutes later the wave of water crossed the borough line into Johnstown. On its way down the valley it levelled the village of Mineral Point and Cambria Iron's planing mill and furniture factory there. It snapped off trees, and carried along boulders and, when it reached the Pennsylvania Railroad yard in East Conemaugh, it added railroad engines and cars to the collection of debris. The village of Woodvale was the next victim. Everything but a portion of the woolen mill and a few houses along its edge was wiped away. Churches, two schools, Rosensteel's tannery, 255 houses, and the Johnstown Manufacturing Company were swept into the Cautier works where they mingled with endless rolls of barbed wire before being crashed into the heart of downtown Johnstown. All but a few downtown buildings were demolished on impact. Trees in Central Park were uprooted and debris piled up to twenty feet left in their place. A backlash washed across the town again when the

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50 Shappee, 210-19. David G. McCullough, The Johnstown Flood (New York, 1968), 54, 72-75.

wave hit the vertical side of Yoder hill and backed up behind the Pennsylvania Railroad's new stone bridge just past the Point. About twenty minutes later the temporary dam broke and the water went on to demolish 148 houses in Cambria City before heading out of the valley through the Conemaugh Gap.[51]

In Johnstown standing water slowly subsided through the night. Survivors made their way across wreckage to join those lucky enough to have been caught in a building that withstood the wave. During the night they listened as fires began to burn and buildings around them collapsed under the prolonged pressure of water and debris. With the morning the shock of the sudden flood was compounded by the scene in the valley. Survivors who may have lost everything--family, home, possessions--gathered on the hillsides and stared out at the "sea of muck and rubble and filthy water. Nearly all of Johnstown had been destroyed. That it was even the same place was difficult to comprehend." They wandered through the wreckage searching for those who were trapped or injured, hoping to find friends and relatives alive.[52]

The flood wave had ripped out telegraph lines and obliterated ten miles of the Pennsylvania Railroad's track. None other than Robert Pitcairn, head of the Railroad between Altoona and Pittsburgh, was stranded at Sang Hollow Station about four miles west of Johnstown. He, the crew, and other passengers were horrified as they watched the Conemaugh rise and become filled with debris. Before dark they counted 119 people, dead and alive, float by, but were able to rescue only seven. When a railroad employee arrived on foot from Johnstown, he gave them an eyewitness account of the devastation there, and Pitcairn relayed a statement to Pittsburgh directed to the editors of the morning papers. He said that Johnstown had been "literally wiped out" and suggested that Pittsburghers launch a relief effort to aid the flood survivors. The news prompted a race to Johnstown. Reporters made the dash first and began sending out stories that made the front pages of virtually every newspaper in the country. The New York Times and New York World devoted their entire front pages to the Johnstown disaster for five consecutive days. Artists conjured up scenes of destruction and photographers took pictures that multiplied and spread the story in the form of postcards and stereoviews.[53]

Volunteers and relief trains were next into the valley. Trains came up the B&O line from Somerset and from Pittsburgh into Sang Hollow loaded with donations ranging from food and clothing to coffins and embalming fluid. It took two weeks to rebuild the track eastward toward Altoona. In the meantime, all normal schedules were suspended and the tracks from Pittsburgh were run at full capacity with cars loaded for Johnstown. Contributions were made by people along the tracks in the countryside and by cities--20,000 pounds of ham was sent from Cincinnati, sixteen carloads of flour from Minneapolis, a

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51 Brown, 110. Shappee, 41, 279.

52 McCullough, 184.

53 McCullough, 198, 174-80, 219.

carload of nails from Wheeling. In addition to supplies, they carried a Pittsburgh fire company that was eventually able to extinguish the fire in the mass of debris at the stone bridge, a company of National Guard troops, and a crew of 300 men from Carnegie's Edgar Thompson Works led by Captain Bill Jones who had worked at Cambria Iron for sixteen years before moving to Pittsburgh. Fifty Red Cross doctors and nurses led by Clara Barton came from Washington, D.C. Many more volunteers, speculators, and sightseers made their way to Johnstown. Cash contributions used to fund relief and clean-up efforts totalled more than $3.7 million. Of that amount, $141,000 was sent from abroad in response to the story of tragedy that spread around the world.[54]

Published estimates of the number of casualties ranged from 1,500 to 10,000, but the figure was finally set at 2,209. Recovering and identifying the dead was the first task survivors faced. Temporary morgues were set up in standing buildings--in the Presbyterian Church on Main Street, in St. Columba's Catholic Church in Cambria City, at the Adams Street School, and in a saloon in Morrellville. As the digging out progressed through summer and fall, bodies continued to be uncovered. Workers were unable to identify more than 700 victims.[55]

In 1885 Cambria Iron Company officials formed the Citizens' Cemetery Association and purchased land from the company on Yoder Hill for a cemetery. It had opened for burials only a year before the flood, and in fall 1889, the unidentified victims were moved from temporary burials around the city to a memorial plot for the "unknown flood dead" in a prominent area of the new cemetery. On May 31, 1892, almost 10,000 people attended a memorial and dedication service at the cemetery, and in this "last public act of the tragedy of the Conemaugh," Johnstown citizens exerted solemn and ceremonial control. The Tribune editor urged them to use the occasion "to consider that the flood, with all its train of horrors, is behind us, and that we have hence forth to do with the future alone."[56]

The enormity and trauma of the disaster, the extent to which its account was published in newspapers and magazines, and the repetition of the story in other forms of popular culture ensured that Johnstown would never forget the flood. It became part of the city's identity, and its memory and mythic power were renewed and reinforced by subsequent floods in 1936 and 1977. The absolute chaos wreaked by the flood on residents' material environment caused them to imbue objects recovered intact from the wreckage and buildings that remained standing with special status and meaning, and these items also served to preserve flood memories. Like the people they were "flood survivors." They called up images of the destruction they had physically "experienced," yet they remained whole and functional.

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54 McCullough, 240, 201, 203, 71-2, 232-33, 225-26.

55 McCullough, 192-96.

56 McCullough, 267-68. Shappee, 133, 599-602.

Searching for such remnants of past lives became another occupation of survivors in the days immediately after the flood. The location where an object was found became part of its story, for it often represented the absurdity and surrealism of the total, disorienting displacement of the flood. One family found only a photograph album, some books and silverware scattered a mile from the former site of their house. A doctor who had just moved to town recovered only a single shaving mug. A lawn ornament from the yard of James Morley's Main Street mansion was salvaged and, in 1944, was donated to the city. Considered worthy of enough public import to be set up in the public square at Main and Market streets, it has since become the subject of flood folklore as the statue of a dog who rescued "a young girl from the flood waters." Besides objects like this that were passed down through families as a locus for family oral history, another form of flood relic were the souvenirs bought by sightseers and even by local residents who wanted something purposefully sold to commemorate the disaster. At first these included bits and pieces collected from the debris, "broken china, piano keys, beer bottles, horseshoes, buttons, even . . . brick or wood shingles." Soon, however, items manufactured for sale included books, postcards, and plates.[57]

Of the "flood survivor" buildings, the Franklin Street Methodist Church (HABS No. PA-5677) is one of the most revered, for it is credited with deflecting the full force of the flood wave from buildings on Main Street, thus saving the people who took shelter inside them. Probably the most famous of this group of Main Street buildings is Alma Hall, the four-story, brick Odd Fellows' hall where, by the morning of June 1, 246 people had found safety.

The Presbyterian Church down the street acquired flood associations because of its use as a morgue and it gained further notoriety because of the feud that arose between its pastor, Reverend David Beale, and his most prominent congregant, John Fulton, local head of Cambria Iron Company. Fulton opposed Beale's decision to pursue his "idea of writing a book on the flood and realizing much money," and Beale accused Fulton of being "provoked because Beale permitted the use of the church as a morgue." The sixteen-month quarrel included shouting and fist-shaking episodes during meetings and services in the church that were covered by Johnstown and Pittsburgh newspapers. The Blairsville Presbytery finally negotiated an end to the battle with Fulton apologizing and Beale resigning. By 1913 the congregation built a new church at the corner of Lincoln and Walnut streets, and the old building was converted into the Nemo movie theater. In 1988, interest in it has been revived not because it is one of the few surviving theaters once so important in downtown social life, but because of its role during and after the 1889 flood.[58]

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[57] McCullough, 233-34, 224. "#11. Morley's Dog, Main and Market Streets," in 1889 Johnstown Walking Tour (Johnstown Flood National Memorial, National Park Service, 1983), 15. "Search on for 1889 Artifacts," Centennial Reporta, Newsletter of the Johnstown Flood Centennial Project, 2 (March/April 1988): 1, 7-8.

[58] McCullough 170-71. Shappee, 577-80. Jeff McCready, "Last Show at Theatre?" Johnstown Tribune-Democrat (June 16, 1988), 1. Jean Crichton, "Music and Lights of Main Street," in Johnstown: The Story of a Unique Valley, 667-705. See Fulton's account of the Beale controversy in his Autobiography. In I:15 it is noted that

The rapid and extensive new construction that took place in the months and years after 1889 also acquired a place in the rhetoric of Johnstown's flood history. It was interpreted as representing the "Johnstown spirit" of determination and vitality in the face of hardship. A 1969 study of the "Potential for Human Resources and Economic Growth" in Johnstown cited the Joseph Johns Junior High School at the corner of Main and Walnut streets as an example of one of these buildings symbolic of Johnstown's resurgence. The demolition of the school was apparently delayed because of public sympathy for what the building represented. In somewhat euphemistic language, the study criticized affection for such buildings as sentimentality for the past that inhibited progress toward the future--these symbols, it stated, "have adversely affected decision making and have further complicated problem solving in the twentieth century."[59]

Post-Flood Development

> *This mammoth enterprise [the Cambria Ironworks] at once attracted to the town a large amount of business and a vast increase of population. . . . Besides the increased importance of Johnstown proper, offshoots from the town sprang up like the creations of Aladdin's lamp.*[60]
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> *. . .visitors to the valley were hopelessly confused by this maze of . . . boroughs and . . . villages . . .*[61]

Any "decision making" or "problem solving" in the twentieth century must deal with some aspect of the flood's legacy, for it formed the dividing line in Johnstown history. Not only does much of the city's built environment date from the post-flood building boom, but the municipal government and the city itself were reformed as part of the flood-recovery process.

Consolidation of the many surrounding boroughs into one city had been considered since the 1850s, but except for the annexation of Kernville in 1851 as the Fifth Ward, the issue had never gotten past the discussion stage. The wholesale devastation of the flood, however, made the former political

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the Main Street Presbyterian Church was sold in 1911 and that the congregation worshipped in the Majestic Theatre for about a year before their new church was opened.

59 Levine et al., 150.

60 Chapman, 111.

61 Shappee, 111.

boundaries obsolete and consolidation seemed an expedient and progressive means to effect physical and psychological flood recovery.[62]

Consolidation was approved in a public election on November 6, 1889. The boroughs of Johnstown, Millville, Cambria City, Prospect, Woodvale, Crubbtown, and Conemaugh became the single city of Johnstown, population of 22,941. Portions of Stonycreek and Upper Yoder townships asked to be annexed after the election and were soon accepted. In February 1890, the city's first mayor, W. Horace Rose, and council were elected. Scandals promptly broke out over the salaries set for the officeholders.[63]

The delineation of the individual boroughs that formed the 1889 city and those that were subsequently annexed was first determined by topography and distance. Johnstown, the oldest, occupied the central position in the fork at the confluence of the Stony Creek and Little Conemaugh. The distance a person could easily walk from home to work limited the community's spread. So, rather than one village expanding up and down the rivers, many self-contained but contiguous communities developed. Conemaugh, bordering the eastern edge of Johnstown, was the second to be incorporated in 1849. Millville, on the western edge, ran along the north bank of the Conemaugh. It was home of the Cambria Iron Company's original works, incorporated in 1858. Cambria City, across the Conemaugh from the works, was laid out in anticipation of emigrant ironworkers who would need to live near their work place; it was incorporated as a borough in 1861. Two years later the community on the hill above the mill to the northeast was incorporated as Prospect borough. It was noted as being "inhabited by miners and less provident millmen" and as "the bleakest of the communities in the valley." The prevailing winds blew mill smoke directly across it. Just beyond Cambria City along the north bank of the Conemaugh was the village of Coopersdale. Speculators systematically developed it in 1874, but it had its origin in the canal period as a small settlement around Perkin's lock. Across the river from Coopersdale was another speculative development, Morrellville, named for Cambria Iron General Manager Daniel J. Morrell, and intended to attract millworkers who wanted to "get out into the country." As Morrellville filled up, Oakhurst, on its western border, was established. To the east of Morrellville, along the slopes of Yoder Hill, is Brownstown; incorporated in 1908, it bordered the southern half of Cambria City that was demolished in the early 1960s.[64]

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62 Shappee, 106, 548-52.

63 Moxham was also annexed in 1889 and was followed by Walnut Grove, Roxbury, and Rosedale. In 1897, Morrellville and Coopersdale were added to the city while the boroughs of Franklin and East Conemaugh voted to remain separate. Ibid., 555-58. Levine et al., 150-51. Edwin T. Pawlowski, "History of City Planning in Johnstown," in Johnstown: The Story of a Unique Valley, 461. Carmen V. Scialabba, "An Analysis of the 1970 Consolidation Effort of Johnstown, Westmont, Southmont, and Upper Yoder," Master's thesis, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 1981, 2.

64 Shappee, 121-24. Quote identifying Perkin's lock in Johnson "Johnstown and the Pennsylvania Canal," in Johnstown: The Story of a Unique Valley, 235. Cambria City demolition mentioned in Pawlowski, "History of City Planning in Johnstown," Johnstown, 468.

Up the valley of the Little Conemaugh northeast of Johnstown are the boroughs of Franklin and East Conemaugh that grew up around the Pennsylvania Railroad shops; both were incorporated in 1868. Connecting them to Conemaugh and Johnstown was Woodvale, incorporated in 1869 and named for Charles S. Woods, an officer of Cambria Iron, and the site of the company's Johnstown Manufacturing Company.[65]

Immediately south of Johnstown were the communities of Kernville, west of Stony Creek bordering the foot of Yoder hill, and Hornerstown, on the east side of Stony Creek. Kernville was incorporated into Johnstown in 1851 as its Fifth Ward, Hornerstown in 1881 as the Seventh. An oxbow in Stony Creek forms Hornerstown's southern border. Its southern neighbor is the Johnson Street Rail Company's Moxham. Across the river in the curve of the oxbow was Crubbtown, which became the Eighth Ward in 1889.[66]

The flood, of course, devastated the various borough governments. A detachment of state militia headed by General Daniel Hastings took their place until July and treated the area as a single, large jurisdiction. As the individual councils gradually reassembled they found themselves faced with formidable rebuilding expenses and seriously depleted tax bases. Johnstown borough lost property tax revenue on 1,116 houses demolished by the flood. Because of the council's lack of funds and organization little headway was made toward rebuilding or reinstituting basic services. Citizens also complained about the re-formed police department's efforts to deal with the "lawless characters" drawn to Johnstown "by the expectation of plunder."[67]

The all-around confusion and ineffectiveness of the local governments gave impetus to the movement for consolidation set in motion by Arthur Moxham in June. This time support for the motion was gained easily. The Cambria Iron Company gave its sanction on July 24. The Flood Relief Commission appointed by the governor to oversee the recovery process dispensed aid to the Johnstown area without regard to the former boundaries. Public health authorities had been concerned about unsanitary conditions in the valley's boroughs even before the flood, and they feared that the pervasive filth residents lived with during the months of cleanup could only be dealt with by a consolidated, overarching authority. Citizens who were rebuilding on the same sites were concerned with preventing future catastrophes and decided that the "common engineering problem" of the flood-prone valley should be studied and regulated by "a single intelligent management." The business and political community translated the movement into an opportunity for civic boosterism. Johnstown's burgess described the public relations effect of

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65 Shappee, 123.

66 Shappee, 105, 110, 123-24. See Chapman, 112-17, for descriptions of Conemaugh, Prospect, Millville, Cambria City, East Conemaugh (Conemaugh Station), and Woodvale. McCormick, 9-11, also has informative descriptions of Conemaugh, East Conemaugh, Prospect, Cambria City, Perkinsville (Coopersdale), Johnstown, and Millville.

67 Shappee, 536-49.

consolidation: "We will not be . . . known as a town surrounded by villages and hamlets, but will be a busy, thriving, prosperous people, . . . residents of the city of Johnstown."[68]

The post-flood city did indeed become a thriving place. Not only was the city busy with replacement construction but new development picked up as speculators took advantage of residents' desire to move out of the floodplain into the surrounding hills. The irony of this expansion, however, was that new development took the form of even more contiguous, but self-contained, communities and while many did join the city, others have stubbornly maintained their civic independence.

Lots were sold on top of Frankstown Hill to form Daisytown, incorporated in 1893. Ferndale, in the bend of a second oxbow of Stony Creek south of Moxham, was incorporated in 1896. Heirs to the Benshoff family, owners of land in Minersville, sold building lots there for $100-$300. In Rosedale, along Hinckston Run north of Minersville, 100 lots were advertised at $100 with monthly payments of $5. In the already established suburbs land was divided into narrower lots. Moxham in particular became more densely populated at this time.[69]

The most ambitious post-flood development was undertaken by the Cambria Iron Company. It purchased land and converted company farmland on Yoder Hill into a plat for a full-scale borough that included space designated for a school, store, and resort hotel, as well as for residences. The plans were announced in July 1889, and lots were offered for sale in October, but sales were slow until a direct transportation route was opened from the development, called Westmont, down into Johnstown. The road to Westmont was steep and twisting, not easily walked or covered by horse and wagon even in good weather. The solution devised by the company was the Inclined Plane, a cable-car system with two counter-balanced cars running on tracks straight up the hill from the intersection of Vine and Union streets to Westmont's Edgehill Drive. The Incline was completed by June 1891, lot sales picked up, and Westmont was recognized as a borough in 1892.[70]

The Inclined Plane dramatically illustrated the need for easy transportation access among the Johnstown boroughs. The Johnstown Street Railway Company's tracks and cars were completely destroyed by the flood and the system was one of the last public services to be re-established. In September 1889 the company leased its rights to Tom Johnson who promised to rebuild and electrify the system. As co-proprietor of Johnson Street Rail in Moxham, Johnson was better prepared to undertake the reconstruction. The main

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68 Ibid., 550-53.

69 Shappee, 584-86.

70 Shappee, 586-88. Richard A. Burkert and Eileen Mountjoy Cooper, Uphill All the Way: Johnstown and Its Inclined Plane (Johnstown, 1985), 3-11.

lines were completed and reopened in April 1892. The restored streetcar system provided the physical link that made political consolidation workable and helped expand local communities so residents would identify with the larger political entity of the city of Johnstown.[71]

From the center of Johnstown passengers could ride as far west as Morrellville, east to Conemaugh, and south into Moxham. In 1896 a branch was extended to reach the amusement park, Luna Park, in Roxbury, and in 1902 another was opened from Moxham to Windber. In 1910 the company was reorganized and operated under new management as the Johnstown Traction Company. This new financing supported the construction of a branch to Southmont in 1911, and through Morrellville into Oakhurst in 1915. By 1918 the company reported operating 108 cars--including trailers and open and closed cars for different seasons--over 35.7 miles of track. In 1922 a subsidiary, the Traction Bus Company, was formed to offer bus service between the streetcar lines. Because of financial difficulties during the 1930s and damage to the tracks in the 1936 flood, the cheaper bus service was increased and substituted for streetcars. At the request of Westmont residents, in 1938 bus transportation from Johnstown to Westmont via the Inclined Plane was initiated. Tracks and cars continued to be updated until the company made the switch to all-bus service in June 1960.[72]

The continuing extension of the streetcar lines followed the extension and evolution of the city's neighborhoods, and even though the system was a mechanism of unification that encouraged the diffusion of inward-looking neighborhoods, the individual boroughs have retained their names and distinctiveness. They are a key to understanding the present city and its people and render the cityscape a primer of local history.

Housing the Working Class

> *Seventy years ago . . . we had a population that was perfectly assimilated. Everybody spoke the English language. We had no class distinctions. There were no rich men. There were no long rows of drinking saloons. . . . There was no smoke of mill or factory . . . .*
>
> *Johnstown itself is a dispiriting borough, shabby and dirty. Darkness and desolation are apt to spread where manufacture gets a foothold; but the factories themselves are grandly elemental enough to compensate. It is more in the streets and houses of the working people that the need for beauty is felt, to overcome*

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71 Nancy Coleman, "History of Public Transportation," in Johnstown: The Story of a Unique Valley, 436-38. Shappee, 116, 563-64.

72 Coleman, 437-47.

> *the discord which the works bring into the picturesque highlands.*[73]

Westmont, with its comparatively rural setting and widely spaced homes for the spectrum of Cambria's management and even a few prosperous laboring men, was an attempt to regain the classless community James Swank remembered from his boyhood. But down in the valley, out of sight of that tree-ringed suburb, the Cambria Iron Company was expanding and it had become difficult to sustain the myth of a classless America. Although George Lathrop's description of conditions in the city carries the aesthetic tone and perspective of an elite observer, it makes clear that by the 1880s there were neighborhoods in the valley that the middle and upper classes looked upon with distress and did their best to ignore. Some were successful. In the diary he kept while serving as general manager of the ironworks, John Fulton once mentioned that his family's "hired girl" had left their employ and complained of "the uncertainty of hired help." This brief comment was the closest he ever came to acknowledging the existence of Johnstown's "other half."[74]

In other cases people did more than acknowledge immigrant and working-class communities; they cited them as blights and recommended their destruction. A 1917 plan for "civic adornment" and improvement sponsored by the city council and planning commission called attention to poor housing conditions. It included photographs of street scenes in two offending neighborhoods. The caption for a view of Rosedale residences read "What's in a name?" A shot of Bradley Alley in Cambria City was accompanied by more straightforward commentary: "Conditions Such as These Are the Greatest Enemies to Civilized Housing. How Many Boarders in Each 'Home'?"[75]

The Plan's authors wrote that a solution to Johnstown's housing problem was "the one dominating feature required for the continued expansion" of the city. They urged civic leaders and lawmakers to adapt and enforce a local housing ordinance. Not only did Johnstown need more homes, they wrote, it needed:

> homes built and located with a clear understanding of the relation of domicile to efficiency in labor, to good health, to contentment and to that feeling of pride which urge men to extra labors and to endure many temporary inconveniences for the beautifying of

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[73] James M. Swank, "Recollections of Early Johnstown," in Cambria County Pioneers (Philadelphia, 1910), 43, 45. George Parsons Lathrop, "The Heart of the Alleghanies," Harper's New Monthly Magazine (August 1883) 67: 334-35.

[74] Fulton, Autobiography (1914), July 4, 1891, 170. Young women often supplemented the immigrant family's income by working as "maids, cooks, and servants in American homes," Weber and Morawska, 301.

[75] Pawlowski, "History of City Planning in Johnstown," in Johnstown: The Story of a Unique Valley, 462-65. Henry Hornbostel, George Wild, and Victor A. Rigaumont, The Comprehensive Plan of Johnstown (Johnstown, 1917), 120.

> their home premises and the comfort of those they hold dear.

Clearly, the planners had in mind the employees of the Cambria Steel Company and the strategies of industrial management and psychology. In fact, the population growth they predicted for the city was largely attributed to the thousands of workers who would be guided to Johnstown "by the Cambria mills' pillars of smoke by day and pillars of fire by night." They quoted an appeal to city leaders from the head of the company for homes "to accommodate these men and their families."[76]

Since its founding, the iron company built homes that were rented to employees but it was never able to house the entire work force, nor did it require employees to occupy company housing. A publicity report of March 1853 claimed an annual 10 percent return in rental fees on an investment of $40,000 for the construction of 200 houses. In December 1853, company President Peter Schoenberger reported that tenements for forty more families had just been completed. They were built of brick from the company brickyard. Thomas Chapman observed in 1865 that the company had erected scores of "comfortable dwelling houses" for its employees.

> They do not present that squalid, crowded, uncomfortable appearance which is characteristic of the tenement houses that are usually huddled around similar works. These houses are large and well constructed . . . each family has its suite of apartments distinct and separate from its neighbors, or in many instances a house to itself, roomy and comfortable.[77]

Although no source specifies the location of these buildings, the earliest company housing was probably built in Millville, near the works if not actually "huddled" around them. An 1854 map shows rows of identical structures in plan -- presumably tenements -- in the southeastern end of the borough. Chapman wrote that "the greater part of this town [Millville] was built and is owned by the company. It is peopled almost exclusively by the employees of the rolling mill." Tax records for 1880 list fifty-six company-owned houses in Millville and show almost no millworkers in the borough owning their own homes. This concentration of buildings around the mill gave one contemporary historian of the 1889 flood the impression that "three-fourths of the [city's] people lived in small frame tenements on the flats by the river around the works of the Cambria Company," but the company also built housing in other sections of the city including Prospect, Cambria City, Conemaugh, and Johnstown proper. In fact, Cambria Iron professed a policy of scattering its

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[76] Morawska notes Johnstown's housing shortage, see text and table 3.4, 89. Hornbostel et al., Plan, 119-27.

[77] The Cambria Iron Company of Johnstown, Pa. (1853), 20, 5. Chapman, 159.

building projects and charging reasonable rents so that other rental agents were forced to offer competitive, affordable rates.[78]

Contrary to Chapman's view of the iron company's housing as "large and well constructed," "roomy and comfortable," in 1887 an investigator for the Pennsylvania Bureau of Industrial Statistics described its "shanties . . . built of rough unplaned boards, without clapboarding," containing four rooms, "all of them small with low ceilings" and set in surroundings "barren and bare." Perhaps the most infamous block of company housing was christened "Rotten Row" by the Johnstown Tribune in sarcastic reference to the nickname for London's elegant Route de Roi. The row of tenements was located "on the Ten Acre," apparently the area across the Conemaugh from the western end of Cambria City. In January 1882 the Tribune summarized building activity in the city during the previous year. Samuel McCamant's construction firm had built forty-eight units for the company on the Ten Acre. By June 1882 the paper reported that "there is something radically, criminally wrong in the management of household affairs among the Hungarians who are the principal if not the only inhabitants of the company's new houses on the Ten Acre." There had been frequent outbreaks of an unidentified disease among the residents. Often "the cases were so serious as to necessitate removal to the almshouse" in Ebensburg. Perhaps it was fear of disease as well as nativism that motivated fellow workers to harass "the objectionable foreigners." In 1887 the Tribune noted that "the Ten-Acre furnished many an item for the papers and was a source of almost constant revenue to the Squires--surety of the peace, assault and battery, and such-like complaints being made with monotonous frequency." "The frame shells, or long rows of apartments" were built specifically for the Hungarian immigrants and, the Tribune writer continued, "there they lived, everybody knows how, an occasional American family with Hungarian instincts slipping in with them" until, under "a spirit of discontent," they scattered, moving across Cambria City and Minersville. In 1887 Cambria Iron demolished the Ten Acre tenements, presumably because of their reputation as well as because of the reason given in the Tribune--the need for more space for the mill yard.[79]

The experience with the Ten Acre property may have been one reason the company scattered its housing around the boroughs rather than concentrating it in one or two sections. According to records collected by the Tribune, in 1881 the company commissioned the construction of 126 dwelling units in six

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[78] T. Doran, "Plan of the Boroughs of Johnstown and Conemaugh" (1854). Chapman, 114. Bennett, 166. Willis Fletcher Johnson, History of the Johnstown Flood (Edgewood Publishing Company, 1889), 17. Shappee, 174. Report on Conditions of Employment in the Iron and Steel Industry in the United States, Vol III, Working Conditions and the Relations of Employers and Employees (Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1913), 428.

[79] Joel B. McCamant, Bureau of Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, Part III, 14 (Harrisburg, 1887), 20, quoted in Shappee, 174-75. Shappee, 87-8. Articles in the Johnstown Tribune: "Building in Johnstown and Suburbs," January 3, 1882; "Rotten Row," June 6, 1882; "Frightened Away," July 10, 1882; "The 'Ten-Acre' Tenements No More," March 24, 1887. The Pennsylvania Railroad's "Ten Acre Bridge" at the same location is often referred to. A bridge crosses the Conemaugh at the site--near the Conemaugh and Blacklick Railroad building on Iron Street between Coopersdale and Minersville--today.

different areas--a double house on Washington Street opposite the company store and six tenements on Main Street opposite the Point, two blocks of four tenements on Coal and Railroad streets in Conemaugh, twenty-six units in Prospect, twenty in East Conemaugh, sixteen in Minersville, and the forty-eight on the Ten Acre plot. Total cost of construction was $52,000. With this new construction the Tribune reported that the company owned a total of 460 tenement houses with an average monthly rental of $7.50 each, providing a yearly revenue of $42,000. The Tribune praised the company for lowering its rental fees by 10 percent during the 1873 Panic and refusing to raise them in contrast to private property owners who, the paper said, had since raised rents from 200 to 300 percent.[80]

Another publication sympathetic to the company, The Iron Trade Review, described its housing in 1912. At that time Cambria Iron rented to 434 "families," although the Review was quick to add, "the policy of the company house has never been fostered and every inducement is offered to the workingmen in its plants to become homeowners." The National Labor Tribune did not interpret this policy in such a favorable light. It explained that "knowing the love of home and the associations connected with it," the Johnstown managers cultivated this psychological and economic attachment to "chain" its labor force to the company. After encouraging workers and their families to sacrifice for years in order to purchase a home, their wages were kept "so near poverty that hundreds of them cannot get away." Housing, then, could function directly as a means of controlling the work force by literally containing it in company-owned space or by binding it to the company-dominated community.[81]

In Westmont, the pervasive company presence was at once subtle and blatant. It was obvious in the company's ownership of the land and many of the houses and in its planning and maintenance of the land, streets, and the Inclined Plane. Yet, perhaps more important, it was ironically subtle that this effort was intended to enable a retreat and distancing from the noise, smells, and sights created by the company in the mills and surrounding neighborhoods down in the valley.

As Johnstown's middle- and upper-class community was transferred to and consolidated in Westmont, recent immigrants and the laboring contingent of Cambria's mills and mines lived in noisy, densely populated neighborhoods like Cambria City and Minersville. Negotiating with the constraints of the city's socio-economic structure, with the immediate difficulties of surviving on wages below a standard subsistence level, they built their own self-contained, vital communities under the cloud of steel-mill smoke.[82]

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80 Johnstown Tribune, "Building in Johnstown and Surroundings," January 3, 1882; "Quite a Difference," January 4, 1882. The first article contains an extensive list of area builders and a description of their commissions for 1881.

81 "Helping the Workingmen to Help Themselves," The Iron Trade Review (June 6, 1912), 1215. Bennett, 168, quote from National Labor Tribune (July 18, 1874), in Bennett, 163.

82 According to Weber and Morawska, 297, a steel laborer's wage of $11.00 per week was $3.00 "less than

CONCLUSION

> *Your town or towns have outgrown the struggling village . . . and whether you desire it or not, this condition forces upon you the character and responsibility of a city.*[83]

Greater Johnstown is a patchwork of neighborhoods and separate boroughs. It is this collection of communities that gives Johnstown the "character" of a city, and gives the city its character. The preceding written and visual portraits of four Johnstown neighborhoods are intended to capture different aspects of that character. Collectively they provide a sense of both the variety and the common denominators of life in Johnstown.

These neighborhoods -- downtown, Cambria City, Minersville, Westmont -- represent specific aspects of the city's history and a number of other communities should be documented to fill in the story. The Old Conemaugh section bordering the downtown was the hub of the town during the canal area and, later, the site of warehouses and small manufacturing establishments. In the late nineteenth century, the Cambria Iron Company built company housing there, including a boarding house for its single black workers. Old Conemaugh was predominantly a working-class area but it was more ethnically diverse than Cambria City with its Irish, German, and East European immigrant residents. The Turners' Hall, a German club, stands on Railroad Street.

The former borough of Coopersdale at the northwest end of Johnstown also dates from the canal era when it grew up as a settlement around Perkins' lock. It was the home of an academy that still overlooks the community from a hill along Academy Street; a study of this community would provide an opportunity to investigate the development of education in Johnstown through the private and high school institutions.

Public-school buildings from the early-twentieth century are still in use around the city and as sites of Americanization and socialization have played a significant role in the life of the city. One of these buildings is in Morrellville, also in Johnstown's "West End," and a neighborhood that deserves study as the successor to Cambria City and Minersville. Morrellville, named for Cambria Iron's first general manager, was developed to attract millworkers who wanted to move to the "country" and so, as well as following Cambria City's development chronologically, it may have been the place immigrants chose when they were able to advance beyond unskilled

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subsistence level for a standard family of four."

[83] Johnstown Tribune March 28, 1881, quoted in Nathan Daniel Shappee, "A History of Johnstown and the Great Flood of 1889," (Ph.D. diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1940).

positions and could afford to move to somewhat larger homes farther from the mills.

Like Morrellville, neighboring Brownstown--between Cambria City and Westmont--was developed for millworkers in the late nineteenth century. Company housing built after 1889 was also located here. Brownstown was incorporated as a borough in 1908 and has never joined the city. It might be used to represent the other boroughs within and around Johnstown that have also chosen to maintain their independence. The issue of consolidation has been a recurring one in Johnstown history and is an important key to the city's character.

Kernville, incorporated as the city's Fifth Ward in 1851, was important in the city's early development, predating Westmont as a location of larger middle- and upper-class homes. In more recent years, Kernville has become home for many of Johnstown's black residents and it might serve as a place to begin research on this aspect of the city's history. Southmont Borough, incorporated in 1919, originated as a rural retreat for Johnstown's wealthier citizens and was developed for more concentrated settlement after Westmont had proved a success and, like Westmont, it contains extant buildings constructed as company housing.

Perhaps the most visually striking Johnstown communities are the boroughs of Franklin and East Conemaugh. Set off from the rest of the city up the valley of the Little Conemaugh, these two boroughs--with churches, bars, and houses painted subdued tones set along hilly streets--fit the stereotype of the western Pennsylvania steel town. They surround Bethlehem Steel's Franklin Works, now the most active of the Johnstown mills, and this integration in the landscape of home and industrial work place belies the artifical boundary that separates their study.

In the downtown other individual buildings merit the specific study that HABS reports provide. In addition, more attention should be paid to residential spaces both in extant detached homes and in the hotels and floors above retail and office spaces. Office buildings also deserve additional research time. They are a prominent feature of the downtown landscape and as the focus and setting of much of twentieth century life, need to be studied as significant cultural spaces. Johnstown also serves as the medical center for the region and the many hospitals around the city denote another important aspect of its twentieth-century history.

Johnstown's industrial and engineering structures and other company-related buildings are being documented by historians and architects of the Historic American Engineering Record but, particularly in Johnstown, it is difficult and misleading to regard the residential, commercial, and public buildings outside the context of the mills, and vice versa. We hope this connection is at least implicit in the histories--of the city, the neighborhoods, and the individual buildings themselves--provided here. We recommend this work be expanded and used to nominate the four neighborhoods to the National Register of Historic Places, and that this theme of

characteristic steel-mill neighborhoods be continued in that context. These neighborhoods warrant nomination not only because of their contribution to the city's identity, but also because of their own architectural and historical cohesiveness as vital, individual communities.

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Project Information: This report was part of a larger project to document the city of Johnstown, Pennsylvania. The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), Robert Kapsch, chief, at the request of America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP). See additional HABS reports on buildings in the downtown and other neighborhoods.

This report was prepared by Kim E. Wallace, supervisory historian of the project, in August 1988 under the direction of Alison K. Hoagland, HABS historian. Wallace's and other project historians' work was published as The Character of a Steel Mill City: Four Historic Neighborhoods of Johnstown, Pennsylvania (Washington, D.C.: HABS/HAER, National Park Service,1989), edited by Kim E. Wallace. Illustrations in the publication include large format photographs taken by HAER photographer Jet Lowe and 35 mm photographs taken by the project historians.

Fig. 1.1 Map of Johnstown and vicinity. This 1903 map by M. G. Moore, a mining engineer for Cambria Steel Company, shows the three main divisions of the steel works at that time-- the oldest, Cambria or Lower Works; the Gautier Works next to the downtown; and the Franklin Works farther up the Little Conemaugh. The map also shows the location of the four neighborhoods--the downtown (here called "Johnstown City"), Westmont, Cambria City, and Minersville--that were the subject of this project. Collection of the Johnstown Flood Museum.